

Conservative Lawmaker Who Attacked Corbyn Over Yemen Received Luxury Paid Trip From Saudi Arabia

Conservative MP Helen Whately claimed Jeremy Corbyn is "so poorly informed on Saudi and Yemen." She previously led an all-expense-paid Tory junket to meet with the Saudi monarchy.

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When the United Kingdom's leftist opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn criticized the government for supporting a catastrophic Saudi war on Yemen and welcoming the Saudi crown prince to London, he was attacked by a pro-Saudi Conservative member of Parliament, who claimed the Labour Party chief is "so poorly informed on Saudi and Yemen."

What this right-wing lawmaker failed to mention is that she previously received thousands of dollars in hospitality expenses from the Saudi regime, while on a luxury junket to meet the Saudi king.

Saudi Arabia's authoritarian de facto leader Mohammed bin Salman took his first official trip to the U.K. on March 7. Prince Mohammed dined with Queen Elizabeth in Buckingham Palace and met with Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May on Downing Street.

During the Prime Minister's Questions ([PMQs](#)) session in Parliament, Corbyn lambasted May's government for supporting one of the world's most repressive and extreme regimes as it accelerates a war on Yemen that has created the largest humanitarian crisis on Earth.

"A humanitarian disaster is now taking place in Yemen. Millions face starvation and 600,000 children have cholera because of the Saudi-led bombing campaign and the blockade," Corbyn said. "Germany has suspended arms sales to Saudi Arabia, but British arms sales have increased sharply and British military advisers are directing the war."

"[May's] government are colluding in what the United Nations says is evidence of war crimes. Will the Prime Minister use her meeting with the Crown Prince today to halt the arms supplies and demand an immediate ceasefire in Yemen?" the Labour chief asked.

Conservative Member of Parliament [Helen Whately](#) responded by lashing out at the opposition leader on Twitter, writing,

"Jeremy Corbyn in #PMQs so poorly informed on Saudi and Yemen. He sees everything as an ideological battle rather than the more complicated reality. It's frighteningly simplistic."

Critics immediately pointed out that Whately had recently led a trip with fellow Tory lawmakers to meet with Saudi dictator King Salman. Their tens of thousands of dollars of expenses were paid by the absolute monarchy.

[Middle East Eye](#) exposed in 2017 that Whately had accepted more than USD \$4,000 in hospitality costs for an opulent junket to Riyadh. She was the head of a delegation of eight members of Parliament from the Middle East Group of British Conservative Party.

[Public records](#) show that the Saudi Arabia Ministry of Foreign Affairs paid £3,187 for hotels, food, and transportation just for Helen Whately, during her brief trip in April of that year.



A report in [Saudi state media](#) said the participants in the meeting “reviewed relations of friendship between the two countries and different aspects of cooperation, particularly between the Shura Council and the British Parliament.”

Since the trip, Whately has repeatedly defended the Saudi regime, and denounced its progressive critics.

In response to her critics on Twitter, Whately [copy-and-pasted](#) the following [response](#) 11 [times](#):

“I think you are referring to the cost of my visit to Saudi. I believe in doing what I can to be well informed about the subjects I speak on. It’s important to see for yourself and ask questions, as I have.”



After condemning Jeremy Corbyn for speaking out against Saudi Arabia, Helen Whately proceeded to retweet posts about International Women’s Day. The Conservative lawmaker tweeted nothing about the extreme oppression of women in Saudi Arabia.

Helen Whately’s junket to Riyadh was not the only one. A Parliament watchdog has noted there is a long pattern of more than a dozen Conservative members of Parliament going on luxurious, all-expense-paid [trips to Saudi Arabia](#).

A spokesperson for the monitoring group Campaign Against Arms Trade, told Middle East Eye,

“The Saudi regime appears to be exchanging hospitality and perks for questions and influence. By accepting these donations and those perks, MPs risk sending a message of support to the regime and legitimising its terrible human rights abuses.”

At PMQs, Corbyn drew attention to these human rights abuses in Saudi Arabia.

“Despite much talk of reform, there has been a sharp increase in the arrest and detention of dissidents, torture of prisoners is common, human rights

defenders are routinely sentenced to lengthy prison terms, and unfair trials and executions are widespread, as Amnesty International confirms," the leftist Labour leader said.

He added,

"As she makes her arms sales pitch, will she also call on the Crown Prince to halt the shocking abuse of human rights in Saudi Arabia?"

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